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LETTER DATED 3 NOVEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BURUNDI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement issued by the Government at the closing of the third session of the peace negotiations in Arusha (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this statement circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Gamaliel NDARUZANIYE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Statement by the Government of the Republic of Burundi at the closing of the third session of the peace negotiations in Arusha

At the closing of the third session of the peace negotiations in Arusha, the Government of the Republic of Burundi issues the following statement:

1. The Government notes with satisfaction that, in terms of the agenda of the session proposed by the facilitator and adopted by the parties to the negotiations, the results have exceeded expectations. Not only did general discussions take place on the second and third agenda items - democracy and good governance, and peace and security, respectively - but also the first three committees were set up and a timetable of work was agreed in preparation for the fourth session of negotiations scheduled for 18 January 1999.

2. The Government welcomes the fact that at this third session, as at the previous two, the discussions took place in a calm and open atmosphere. It believes that this positive outcome is encouraging for the whole peace process both within and outside Burundi.

3. The Government is, however, concerned at the persistence of the violence caused by armed groups, despite their commitment to the suspension of hostilities contained in the declaration of 21 June 1998 by the parties to the peace negotiations. There is a risk that the inability of the negotiators and the Facilitator to prevent such violence will result in the Burundian people's no longer considering the Arusha negotiations to be a path to peace but, on the contrary, a source of danger, given that the sessions in Arusha have been preceded and followed by massacres perpetrated by armed groups in a bid to win a place at the Arusha negotiations.

4. The Government is also concerned at the fact that the economic sanctions unjustly imposed on the Burundian people are being maintained despite the numerous promises made by the regional leaders and by the Facilitator of the Arusha negotiations. The process whereby new conditions for the lifting of sanctions are systematically imposed once the previous conditions have been met and whereby deadlines are constantly postponed has ended by discrediting the sponsors of the sanctions in the eyes of the Burundian people, who are anxious to know what their true objectives are.

5. The Government calls on the international community, which has witnessed the unfailing goodwill displayed by the Barundi and has observed the results already attained, to become more closely involved and take action to save the peace process in Burundi by advocating the lifting of the embargo and the suspension of hostilities. The ongoing violence, economic sanctions and destitution, and the tragic humanitarian situations to which they give rise, mean that further progress in the peace process may be irretrievably compromised, despite its promising start.

6. Peace, security, social order and stability are incompatible with extreme poverty. In order to give every opportunity to the national reconciliation which the Barundi actively seek, the Government appeals to the international community to resume economic cooperation without delay. Such support would undoubtedly contribute to the success of the peace process by improving the people's living conditions.

7. The Government of the Republic of Burundi reaffirms its irrevocable commitment to pursuing its efforts to reconcile the Barundi through dialogue and negotiations both within and outside the country. That is its principal responsibility and mission, which is dictated by the highest interests of the Burundian nation. This constitutes a motivation stronger than any other form of pressure.